

'History guy' ✓

A visit with DR&HS Executive Director
Patrick Browne on his 10-year anniversary

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Duxbury Rural and Historical Society Executive Director Patrick Browne's life has always been connected with history. He grew up near Emerson's "bridge that arched the flood," the site of the first battle of the American Revolution. In college, he was known to friends as "the history guy." He's even worn the buckled shoes and hat of a Pilgrim.

Browne recently sat down with the Clipper to talk about Duxbury, history and more.

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Patrick Browne, shown here speaking at the conclusion of an archeological dig on Chestnut Street, has been the executive director of the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society for 10 years.

DR&HS Executive Director Browne is living history

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How did you get started working in the historical field? History has always been my field, and it's what I've always been interested in. Back at UMass Amherst I did a masters degree in history and worked at Plimouth Plantation for a little while [as a Pilgrim reenactor.] Before I came to the historical society I was working at the Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cambridge, which is kind of like a think tank.

Did you always know you wanted to work in history? It's always been my big passion. I actually majored in English, with a history minor, but I went on to do a masters in history. As an undergraduate, my friends used to call me "the history man."

I grew up in Acton. That area is really heavy with Revolutionary War history, and I loved that stuff when I was a kid. One of my favorite places in the world is the old North Bridge in Concord. I used to go to the ceremonies there on Patriots' Day.

In college ... I just wandered into the special collections at UMass, and they had an exhibit with old photos of campus. Looking at these old photos of campus I couldn't believe what it used to look like. I was completely enthralled. It started me researching. It fascinated me.

When you were hired, you walked into a bit of a firestorm, with a rift in the society between the Rural and Historic Society and a splinter group called Members of a n Open Society. What was that like? Complicated. [Laughs.] There were differing views on what the historical society should be doing and where it should be headed. Even though there was a whole lot of tension ... I saw tons of potential. Two months after I was hired I had to give the director's report at the annual meeting and I talked about the potential the organization had. In the midst of all this friction, people had lost sight of that, that the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society is an amazing organization with incredible properties. We have more volunteers than most societies could ever hope for. Even though it was a little nerve-wracking at times, I saw the potential and I was very glad to jump into it.



Browne, dressed in Civil War attire, instructs some young "recruits" during the society's AutumnFest, held at the King Caesar House.